

VARNVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

May 14, 2012 @ 7:00 PM

(I)

Call to Order

Officials present were Mayor Nathaniel “Nat” A. Shaffer, Mayor Pro-Tem Lloyd “Tootie” Griffith, Jr., Councilmen Ralph Smith, Henry Tuten, H. Alexander Campbell, Adam Major, and Ronald Williams, Police Chief Tyrone Smith, Public Works Director, Robert “Bobby” Edwards, Town Attorney, Kevin Brown, and Secretary to the Mayor and Council, Amy Roberts. Absent was Fire Chief Dobie Hiers.

Among the general population in attendance were Brenda Willis, Billy Henderson, Mary Elizabeth Johns (Hampton County Guardian), and Dr. Anthony M. Rea (Varnville Chiropractic Clinic).

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Shaffer. The invocation was given by Councilman Smith and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from the council meeting held on April 9, 2012 for approval. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion that the minutes be accepted for approval and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from a special town council meeting held on April 24, 2012. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to approve the minutes and Councilman Williams seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(II)

Introduction and/or requests of visitors

Mayor Shaffer recognized Dr. Rea and the media.

(III)

Financial report

Mayor Shaffer presented the financial report in the absence of a town clerk. In April 2012, Water Works had an income of \$82,845.28 and expenditures of \$119,320.52 with a deficit of \$36,475.24. Debits for April include a \$100,000 transfer to the General Fund for service fees. The balance in the Water Works account is \$304,721.79. In the General Fund there was an income of \$146,822.97 and expenditures of \$82,609.04 with a net gain of \$64,213.93. The balance in the General Fund is \$67,891.23.

(IV)

Unfinished Business

None

(V)

Reports of Department Heads and Committees

Police Department: Police Chief Tyrone Smith presented the council with a financial report and said there were 28 incident reports for April. Included was a shooting incident on Live Oak Street where the suspect was charged with attempted murder. Chief Smith also reported sexual misconduct where a 21 year old male was caught having sex with a 14 year old female.

Chief Smith informed the council that Varnville Police Department, Hampton Police Department, Estill Police Department and the Hampton County Sheriff's Office would be providing security at the Hampton County Relay for Life which will be held at Wade Hampton High School on Friday, May 18, 2012. This joint security effort has been standard for the past three years.

Chief Smith reported that since Lieutenant Michael Smith became Code Enforcement Officer in April, many letters have been sent out enforcing town codes. The public has had a positive response with no fines having to be issued thus far.

Fire Department: No report in the absence of Fire Chief Dobie Hiers

Department of Public Works: Director of Public Works, Bobby Edwards, reported that the results were in from the town's sanitary survey and once the looping project is complete the town would receive a satisfactory rating.

Mr. Edwards informed the council that the Public Works Department would be providing twenty trash cans and two dumpsters for Hampton County Relay for Life.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith told Chief Smith and Mr. Edwards that both of their departments are doing a good job.

Clerk Treasurer's Office: Nothing to report

Mayor's Office: Mayor Shaffer presented the council with an invitation to the Cornerstone Laying Service at St. Luke A.M.E. Church on Saturday, May 19, 2012 at 11:00 AM. A picnic will be held on the church grounds after the event.

Mayor Shaffer announced that Community of One will recognize Hampton County citizens over 90 years of age at a special ceremony to be held at the Bull Durham Building in Estill on May 20, 2012. Community of One requested that the Town of Varnville purchase a \$25.00 advertisement for their program book. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to purchase the ad and Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor. May is National Older Americans Month.

Mayor Shaffer read an invitation for Home of the June Festival Celebration to be held in Gifford on Saturday, June 2, 2012. Parade line-up is at 10:00 AM and the parade begins at 11:00 AM.

(VI)

New Business

Council discussed amending the employee handbook to include Presidential Election Day as a paid holiday. With no member of council making a motion for the addition, the amendment failed to pass.

Council discussed amending the employee handbook to include random drug testing. Councilman Tuten made a motion to amend the handbook accordingly and Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Mayor Shaffer suggested to the council that the code of ordinances be amended to include a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) disclosure on future meeting agendas. FOIA states: (1) All public bodies must give written public notice of their regular meetings at the beginning of each calendar year. (2) The agenda for regular meetings must be posted on a bulletin board at the meeting location at least 24 hours before the meeting. (3) The local news media must be notified of the time, date, place and agenda for a meeting at least 24 hours before it begins. At future council meetings, the presiding secretary will be asked if all criteria has been met. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to add the FOIA disclosure to future meeting agendas. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Mayor Shaffer recommended that the subject headline for Article IV of the town code be amended to read "Grass & Weeds" and Section 26-93 be amended to state that grass/weeds cannot exceed a height of six inches. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to amend the town code and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith asked Chief Smith how long a citizen would have to comply when issued a warning. Chief Smith stated that a citizen is given 10 days to comply before a fine is imposed.

Mayor Shaffer gave the first reading of Ordinance 2012-03 authorizing an agreement for the transfer of the town's water and sewer system assets to Lowcountry Regional Water Systems (LRWS). Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith stated that he would like all participating towns to come together to discuss the transfer. Councilman Tuten recommended for each town to have their first reading before such a meeting occurred. Councilman Tuten made a motion to accept the first reading of Ordinance 2012-03. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Councilman Williams asked about the job security of employees who might be affected by the transfer. Town Attorney, Kevin Brown, recommended that council have an executive session to further discuss assets, but not employees. LRWS may not be interested in obtaining the town's Water Works employees. Mayor Shaffer called for a special meeting to be held on May 21, 2012 at 4:00 P.M.

Mayor Shaffer stated that LRWS requested a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loan from the Town of Varnville for \$150,000. Councilman Tuten stated that LRWS has requested the same amount from the Town of Hampton as \$300,000 in start-up costs are needed. Councilman Tuten also stated that once LRWS becomes self-supporting (in approximately 2-3

years) the Town of Varnville will get a franchise fee. It was proposed that LRWS receive the loan at the current prime rate of 3.25% + 2% with a 5.25% floor, amortized over 7 years with a balloon and deferred payments for the first 12 months. Mayor Shaffer called for a motion to lend LRWS the money contingent upon them coming into full and operative existence. Councilman Campbell made a motion and Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Dr. Rea addressed the council by requesting a CDBG loan in the amount of \$7,846 to purchase diagnostic equipment for his office. Dr. Rea stated that the new equipment would be a significant upgrade from the equipment he has been using for the past 12 years. Mayor Shaffer reminded council of Dr. Rea's extensive credit history with the town. Dr. Rea has had multiple loans with the town that have been paid in full. He has never missed a payment and typically makes all payments one month ahead of schedule. Attorney Brown recommended that the town lend Dr. Rea the \$7,846 he requested at 5.25% interest for 4 years. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to honor Dr. Rea's request and Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Mayor Shaffer presented the council with a Profit & Loss Budget Performance from the General Fund. He briefly discussed some of the variances on the report. Bobby Edwards brought to the attention of the council that the motor is torn up in the town's 1996 trash truck. He suggested that the town purchase a 2003 trash truck through Amick for \$40,000 - \$50,000. Chief Smith stated that two of the police cars from the state have over 150,000 miles on them. The council asked Chief Smith to check on prices for purchasing new vehicles. Further matters concerning the budget will be discussed at the special council meeting on May 21, 2012.

(VII)

Old Business

None

(VIII)

Council members' concerns/comments

Councilman Smith said that he thought the town has a leash law problem and he will not stop until the issue is resolved. He said his wife was recently attacked by a dog when she was walking.

Councilman Tuten had no comments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith agreed with Councilman Smith about the leash law problem. Again he commended Chief Smith and Bobby Edwards on the good work they do for the town and said that Varnville is looking better than it ever has before.

Councilman Williams asked Bobby Edwards how many summer employees the town planned on hiring. Mr. Edwards said that he planned on hiring 4 summer employees. Councilman Williams commended Mr. Edwards on cleaning the Ginn Street ball park.

Councilman Major asked Mr. Edwards to take notice of the problem with trees and lighting on Ginn Street.

Councilman Campbell had no comments.

Mayor Shaffer told the council that they had received the first option on their room choices for the Municipal Association of South Carolina's Annual Meeting to be held in Hilton Head in June.

(I X)

Adjournment

Mayor Shaffer called for a motion to adjourn at 8.35 PM. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Roberts
Secretary to Mayor and Council